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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF
CESSATION OF THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES

11. Summary: Coverage of Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies March 3 focused on a Taiwan towel-makers' rally Thursday to protest China's alleged economic dumping of the product, a possible corruption scandal related to the freeway electronic toll collection system, and other local issues. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" ran a news story on its page two that quoted U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Chris Hill in Manila as saying that he does not foresee any military confrontation between China and Taiwan due to President Chen Shui-bian's announcement regarding the cessation of the National Unification Council (NUC) and National Unification Guidelines (NUG). Almost all papers carried reports on new AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young's briefing with Taiwan journalists in Washington.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, Soochow University Associate Professor Lo Chih-cheng opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, that the United States has been acting too passively and unenthusiastically with regard to facilitating the resumption of dialogue across the Taiwan Strait. Lo added that Taiwan has seized the opportunity presented by President Chen's announcement of the cessation of the NUC and NUG and has grasped the right to interpret the "status quo." An editorial in the limited-circulated, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also said Chen's announcement regarding the NUC and NUG has ensured that "the Taiwan people have the right to decide and define their own status." An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" found several aspects of Chen's announcement and Washington's response somewhat ironic. An editorial in the limited-circulated, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" questioned how Chen could turn out to be a winner in his row with the United States over the NUC and NUG. End summary.

A) "Cessation of the NUC and NUG Draws Taiwan's Bottom Line"

Lo Chih-cheng, associate professor of political science at Soochow University, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] (3/3):

"The process that resulted in President Chen's announcement of the `cessation of the NUC and NUG' highlights that the United States has been acting too passively and unenthusiastically with regard to facilitating [the resumption of] dialogue across the Taiwan Strait. In the wake of [China's] passage of the Anti-Secession Law and the visits by Taiwan opposition leaders' to China, the principle

of Beijing's Taiwan policy has been to isolate and marginalize the Chen Shui-bian administration. But Washington's response to [Beijing's move] was nothing but constant reiteration of its hope that Beijing would have a dialogue with Taiwan's duly elected leader. Evidently, this kind of verbal expression of [Washington's] wish was unable to persuade Beijing to return to the negotiation table. .

"It is crystal clear that Washington remains the only one who can make Beijing seriously consider resuming dialogue with Taiwan. . From now on, the United States really should seriously consider how to adopt more proactive ways to persuade Beijing to start political dialogue with Taipei. This event [i.e. Chen's announcement] also underscores the fact that Washington needs to review its role as a balancer of cross-Straits relations. Washington tends to define the status quo across the Taiwan Strait as 'no independence, [then] no use of force', and it tends to use 'no unilateral attempt to change the status quo' as a principle for its policy responses. But for a period of time, the United States has shown far more concern over 'no independence' than for 'no use of force.' .

"Washington's hands-off attitude and tolerance will only make Beijing push further and make Taiwan lean toward 'being unified' and 'being annexed.' If Taiwan fails to take any counteraction, it will only make the status quo advance toward an unfavorable direction for Taiwan. . In short, despite the fact that this event has in a way ended for the time being that 'different sides may have different interpretations over the cessation of the NUC and NUG,' Taiwan has actually seized this opportunity and grasped the right to interpret the 'status quo' and 'the definition of altering the status quo.' This may be where the turning point lies [for Taiwan] following the crisis."

B) "Taiwan Has Right to Define Own Status"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (3/3):

". First, the cessation of the NUC and NUG marked the final termination of the most important remaining illegitimate relics of the era of authoritarian rule by the former ruling Kuomintang. . The combination of external and internal pressures made it necessary for the DPP government to act to ensure that a possible new KMT government could not use the NUG to abrogate the hard-won right of free choice of the Taiwan people. With the cessation of the NUC and NUG, any government pushing for an 'ultimate goal' will be required to proceed through legal and constitutional procedures instead of decreeing an 'ultimate goal' by fiat. .

"In addition, the termination of the NUC and NUG marked a major step in the consolidation and deepening of Taiwan's democracy and the principle of 'people's sovereignty.' . Certification of the right of democratic self-determination for the 23 million people of Taiwan is a major historical accomplishment and sufficient to be considered a 'historical legacy' for President Chen and the DPP administration. The third level of meaning is that the summation of these changes ensures that the Taiwan people have the right to decide and define our own status through our democratic system instead of having such definition imposed by authoritarians or great powers, including the United States and the PRC. We should cherish and defend this achievement."

C) "The United States' Interpretation: Chen Shui-bian Has Reiterated His Firm Position to Stick to [His] Inaugural Speech of 2000"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (3/3):

"How ironic! After Chen put up a big show by announcing 'the abolition of the NUC and NUG,' the comment made by the U.S. State Department immediately thereafter was: the United

States has noticed that President Chen has reiterated his firm [position], made in his inaugural speech of 2000, to stick to his pledge of not changing the status quo. It is a well-known fact that the core concept of [Chen's] inaugural speech in 2000 was the 'Five No's' pledge. Is it possible that Washington's interpretation of Chen's 'announcement of the cessation of the NUC and NUG' and his 'seven-point statement' turn out to be, quite unexpectedly, that [he was] reiterating his adherence to the Five No's pledge! .

"Of course, Chen did not explicitly reiterate the 'Five No's' pledge. Based on the U.S. official interpretation, Chen did not announce that he would 'abolish' the NUC and NUG (therefore he did not violate his 'last No' pledge) and he publicly guaranteed that the [planned] constitutional engineering program would be carried out according to 'the existing constitutional procedures' (therefore he cannot possibly violate the 'Four No's' pledges). The inference thus goes like this: Chen was 'reiterating that he will continue adhering to his inaugural speech of 2000,' and the core concept of the 2000 speech was exactly the 'Five No's' pledges. Even though Chen and the DPP tend to want to expand on their 'achievement' over the cessation of the NUC and NUG, . the ultimate right to interpret Chen's announcement actually lies in the hands of the United States. .

". Taiwan independence activists may claim that 'the Taiwan people have scored a big victory,' but the United States' interpretation of Chen's announcement and his seven-point statement is the issue of substance. Washington already deemed 'the pledge of not changing the cross-Straits status quo' as an equivalent of the 'Five No's' pledges, and it also regarded Chen's not using the word 'abolish' as a move akin to not violating the 'last No.' As a result, Chen has, in terms of international politics, failed to cross the zone framed by the 'Five No's' pledges despite the fact that he did not reiterate these pledge. This is the conclusion drawn by the United States for this tempest in a teapot.

"Chen has obediently put on his head the 'incantation hoop' handed to him by the United States. Washington has subtly linked the 'Five No's' pledges with the 'commitment of not changing the cross-Straits status quo.' All the more, Washington has further interpreted Chen's announcement of 'cessation of the NUC and NUG' and his seven-point statement as a 'commitment [that Chen will] stick to his 2000

inaugural speech of not changing the cross-Straits status quo.' Was this a commendation after all or an insult? Was this a big victory or a major defeat? Chen must know what it feels like now without being told, so do the Taiwan people."

D) "Why Chen Could Emerge from His Row with U.S. as a Winner"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said in an editorial (3/3):

"Many observers are wondering why President Chen Shui-bian could get away with abolishing the National Unification Council and Guidelines without incurring U.S. punishment as Washington had threatened in the past month as it sought to stop him from doing so. On the contrary, his relations with the U.S. appear to have even strengthened in the wake of the diplomatic row. . So Chen, in terminating the unification guidelines, has actually altered a significant component of Taiwan's longstanding relations with China. This quiet change, however, was lost on Washington. The U.S. government accepted Chen's claim that he 'has no intention of altering the status quo' and that his new action 'does not involve the change of the status quo.' .

"In the assumption that the [i.e. Chen's] statement had previously been cleared by Washington, this contention [i.e. the 23 million people of Taiwan have the freedom to decide their political future and the government has no right to

force them to opt for unification] must have gained the U.S.'s prior consent. If so, Washington has changed an important position regarding Taiwan. Since the Clinton administration, U.S. government leaders have held that any decision on Taiwan's future must have the respect of the people on both sides of the strait. .

"In addition to the unification matter, Chen also subtly changed his previously stated pledge in another sensitive area with or without the knowledge of the U.S.: his constitutional engineering program. To dispel domestic and foreign concerns about his intentions of pushing for de jure independence, Chen had promised in his second inaugural address in 2004 that his constitutional reform would not touch on any sovereignty issues and, besides, would be carried out according to the rules stipulated in the existing Constitution. But he implied, as revealed in the statement this week, that future participation in his constitutional program will not be limited to legislators. It will be expanded and in such a way: 'from bottom to top' and 'from civil groups to political parties.' This subtle change will provide room for him to make maneuverings or to revise the rules of the game by mobilizing popular support.

"What is difficult to understand is why Chen could emerge from a month-long diplomatic row with Washington, sparked by his controversial political moves, as the final winner and without his U.S. relations being damaged. . Undoubtedly, these latter two agreements [in Chen's statement] helped win the hearts of U.S. officials. This is because a Taiwan remaining loyal to the U.S. with its military power greatly strengthened can play a more meaningful role in serving Washington's strategic interests."

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